

The Boston Globe

MONDAY, APRIL 23, 2007

FAIR WEATHER FRENZY

TODAY: Windy, sunny, unseasonably warm. Highs to 83.
TOMORROW: Some clouds, still breezy, cooler. High 72.

HIGH TIDE: 4:27 a.m., 5:17 p.m.
SUNRISE: 5:52 SUNSET: 7:34
FULL REPORT: PAGE E8

SPORTS

Sox hit 5 homers, complete a sweep of Yankees, 7-6

LIVING|ARTS, E4

DEBATING THE NO-STRINGS ALLOWANCE

HEALTH|SCIENCE

1,835 calories per hour

FOOD COMMERCIALS BOMBARD YOUNG TELEVISION VIEWERS



MICHELE MCDONALD/GLOBE STAFF

Earth Day spirit

Rhea M. Lovell, 8, of Dorchester, jumped into Earth Day activities yesterday at the Franklin Park Zoo. Environmental groups and governments scheduled awareness-raising events in an estimated 170 countries.

State orders review over prison errors

Causes sought for late release of 14 inmates

By Thomas Farragher
GLOBE STAFF

The Patrick administration said yesterday it is ordering a sweeping review of state prison operations to make sure errors that led to the wrongful confinement of at least 14 inmates — one for more than four years — are corrected and not repeated.

Responding to a Globe Spotlight Team report yesterday about a series of sentence miscalculations, Public Safety Commissioner Kevin M. Burke called the mistakes unacceptable and said the state Department of Correction violated its moral and ethical obligation by not notifying the inmates about the errors.

"None of this is acceptable," Burke said. "There is no reason for any kind of error given the system and the numbers of lawyers who examine these cases. And the governor feels the same way."

Burke said he was puzzled by Correction Commissioner Kathleen M. Dennehy's explanation for why one inmate, Rommel Jones, was not informed that he had been kept four years beyond his lawful sentence. Dennehy said that because Jones had a mental illness, she was concerned that he would not be able to fully understand what had gone wrong. She wanted him to learn of it after the department's lawyer contacted his lawyer.

"The explanation I saw in [the Globe] puzzled me, to say the least," Burke said. "That isn't an explanation as far as I'm concerned. That's not acceptable and the commissioner knows that it's

PRISONS, Page B3

HOW IT WORKS

1 Create a profile

- Post picture
- Record voice
- Detail hobbies
- List music choice

Add affiliations to locate mutual friends

2 List trips



- IKEA
 - Driver
 - Passenger
- Red Sox
 - Driver
 - Passenger

3 Sign up for trip

The website calculates the trip cost and divides it by the number of passengers.

4 Find environmental cost

The website estimates the carbon dioxide generated by the trip. The more people, the more green the trip.

5 Arrange pickup

A pickup time is decided upon. Passengers transfer money from their GoLoco accounts to the driver.

6 Take the trip and rate it.

Post your impressions of the driver and passengers. The company takes 10 percent of each transaction.

SOURCE: GoLoco.org
JOAN McLAUGHLIN/GLOBE STAFF

Carpooling gets a new dash of green

By Carolyn Y. Johnson
GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE — Robin Chase tried to transform the concept of car ownership seven years ago when she cofounded Zipcar Inc., the world's largest car-sharing company. Her newest venture fuses social networking and ride-sharing, aiming to change the way people think about car travel altogether. GoLoco.org is part high-tech college ride

board and part social calendar, with a dash of environmental conscience. The online service — which went live yesterday, Earth Day — brokers trips between friends, neighbors, and strangers, then automatically divvies up the cost, the seats in the car, and the carbon dioxide emissions.

"GoLoco: It means go loco — go crazy, go free-spirited. Go location to location with local transportation. Go low cost. Go low carbon dioxide," Chase said.

For years, people have been trying to figure out how to make carpooling work. The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments included requirements, later made voluntary, that big employers in some regions increase the number of passengers per vehicle among their workers during peak travel time. High occupancy vehicle lanes offer a way to zip past gridlocked highways. Workplaces offer incentives such as reduced parking fees.

GOLOCO, Page B3

Mayor's plan on guns appears to miss mark

Little impact seen for taking licenses

By Michael Naughton and Hailey Heinz
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

With gun violence in Boston up sharply in recent years, one of Mayor Thomas M. Menino's top legislative priorities this year would strip convicted gun offenders of their right to drive for up to five years.

Menino, however, wants to take away something that very few gun offenders have, according to a Globe analysis of more than 100 gun convictions last year and state Registry of Motor Vehicles records of those offenders.

Of the 119 gun offenders convicted in Suffolk County last year whose records were reviewed, 79 have already had their driver's licenses revoked or suspended for other reasons, for offenses from selling drugs near schools to repeatedly failing to appear in court on traffic violations.

Many of those 79 have a long history of motor vehicle infractions. And 18 others are not licensed in Massachusetts for other reasons. Just 22 of the 119 have active licenses, according to the analysis.

To criminologists and others who assert Menino's proposal is political and not pragmatic, such numbers are further evidence that passage of the mayor's legislation would have little or no impact on the city's efforts to curb gun violence.

GUNS, Page A8



SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS

Virginia Tech students, still grieving, returned to campus yesterday. **A2.**

Congress hesitant on legislation

By Rick Klein
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — Despite calls for legislative action in the wake of last week's massacre at Virginia Tech, Democratic congressional leaders have no plans to bring up major gun control bills for votes, and supporters of stricter gun laws concede that significant gun legislation is highly unlikely to get serious consideration this year.

Democratic leaders, mindful of political damage their party has sustained in the past for seek-

CONGRESS, Page A4

Amid tensions, US, Iran both give lift to Afghanistan city

By Farah Stockman
GLOBE STAFF

HERAT, Afghanistan — When the US government wanted to show its friendship here after the Taliban fell, it brought fuel to run the generators at the local hospital. When neighboring Iran wanted to show its friendship, it brought electricity to the entire city.

Today, Herat — just 75 miles from the Iranian border — is the only place in Afghanistan with power 24 hours a day, impeccably paved highways, and plans for a railroad. Even US officials acknowledge that this stunning progress occurred mostly thanks to Iran.

As tension mounts over Iran's nuclear ambitions and alleged support for militants in Iraq, Afghanistan offers the greatest chance for cooperation between

AFGHANISTAN, Page A6



JEAN CHUNG FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Engineer Nasir Ahmad Akhondzada at the industrial park in Herat, Afghanistan, where electricity furnished by Iran keeps businesses humming.

For breaking news, updated Globe stories, and more, visit:



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Blue Angels pilot mourned in Mass.

Navy Lieutenant Commander Kevin Davis, who died in an air show Saturday, is remembered for his modest, level-headed ways as a youth in Pittsfield and Reading. **City & Region, B1.**

Inside Today

Hospitals spread word on coverage

Across the state, hospital officials are sitting down with business owners and employees to explain their obligations under the state's new health insurance law. **Business, E1.**

Sarkozy, Royal advance in France

The tough-talking ruling party candidate and the Socialist who is vying to be France's first female president will compete in the runoff election in two weeks. **World, A3.**



Mayor's priority on gun offenders weak, records suggest

► GUNS
Continued from Page A1

One critic, Thomas Nolan, a Boston University criminologist who was a Boston policeman for 27 years, said the legislation is out of touch with the realities of street violence.

"These kids are living in a parallel universe from the rest of us," Nolan said. "It's basically applying a middle-class standard that would probably work on kids from the 'burbs. . . . To these kids in their parallel universe, they don't think about getting their license and driving the family car."

Nolan added: "We have one of the strongest gun laws in the country and that doesn't deter [offenders]. What makes people think that these people even apply for driver's licenses or have them at all?"

Take the case of Robert Perez, 27, of Roxbury, who was arrested in September 2005 after the mother of his children called police to say he had beaten her with a gun. Police found a loaded .38-caliber handgun in his pocket; he pleaded guilty last year to being a career criminal, court documents show. According to RMV records, Perez already had his license suspended indefinitely in 2004 for failure to pay child support. Before 2004, his license had been suspended five other times for reckless driving and drug possession.

Another offender, Keyarn Richardson, 19, of Mattapan, pleaded guilty last year to illegally possessing a gun. Police saw Richardson flee a shooting scene and run into a nearby apartment, according to



Tonya David (left) and Clementina Chery shared a moment during speeches at Boston's Peace Weekend press conference last year. David's daughter was confined to a wheelchair after being struck by an errant bullet.

court documents. Inside the apartment, police found 18 bags of marijuana, which he admitted were his. The trial judge ordered Richardson's driver's license sus-

pending for possessing the drugs under an existing law.

Perez and Richardson are both imprisoned, and neither could be reached for comment.

When the city first touted the legislation, it was Menino's brainchild.

Friday, when the Globe raised questions about its rationale, it became the offspring of the Boston Police Department.

"It was suggested in a note from a patrol officer downtown," Police Commissioner Edward F. Davis said in an interview. Many officers, he said, want to see gun offenders face the added penalties for which drug offenders were once singled out.

Davis said he believes that in some instances police officers might recognize a gun offender driving, and have cause to stop the car. But he acknowledged that his aides had not done any research to see whether gun offenders had licenses.

The legislation does nothing to address the root causes of gun violence, he said, because of the federal government's unwillingness "to do anything about guns." He added: "So we resort to these kinds of things to do whatever we can to stop it. Obviously, this isn't perfect. But it's all we've got right now."

A Globe survey of officials in New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, and St. Louis found no similar law, and Nolan said he had never heard of such a measure. Davis, too, said he was unaware of any similar law elsewhere.

With Menino's legislation lan-

guishing in a legislative committee, Boston this year is experiencing a sharp increase in homicides. As of yesterday, there had been 17, compared with 14 at this time last year. Of those 17 victims, 16 were shot to death.

After Menino made the proposal in January, Globe reporters, under the state public records law, obtained a list of case numbers for the 456 people convicted of gun crimes in Suffolk County last year. After reviewing court files on scores of offenders in five Boston courts, the Globe sought their driving records from RMV.

The Globe analysis, which sampled a quarter of those convicted last year, was not scientific. But the findings are consistent with what law enforcement specialists said they would expect to find.

The proposed law would also revoke or suspend the registrations of convicted offenders and prevent convicted minors from obtaining a license until they turn 21.

Under existing laws, RMV can suspend or revoke the driver's license of an individual for some drug offenses if the trial judge approves the sanction. In addition, sex offenders who fail to register with the state can have their licenses revoked.

Just a day after he proposed the legislation, Menino made curbing violence a cornerstone of his State of the City address. "We

need to convince Congress to pass common sense gun laws — laws that punish immoral gun dealers and protect our citizens," Menino declared.

But to the mother of Louis D. Brown, a 15-year-old who died when he became caught in gang crossfire on his way to a Christmas party in 1993, the mayor's proposal is just another reactionary step.

"Every time something happens it's a quick response. It has to be a comprehensive approach," said Clementina Chery, who heads the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, a nonprofit in Dorchester.

Chery added: "You can have all of the gun laws you want on the books, but it still doesn't get to the core of what the problem really is: How are guns getting in here, and why are they getting in kids' hands?"

Nolan also said he doubts that such a law would deter most offenders from driving. But he worried that it might do more harm than good for a gun offender who leaves prison determined to turn his life around.

"We are really strapping these young men," Nolan said. "If they don't have a driver's license, arguably they can't get to a place we would like them to be, which is a place of employment."

James Alan Fox, a criminal justice professor at Northeastern University, said the proposed law also fails to consider young people who carry guns for self-defense.

"The risk of being unarmed in the face of a threat is worse than the risk of being unlicensed in the face of needing to go somewhere," Fox said. "From their perspective the criminal justice system, whether it be the mayor and his initiative or the DA, can just take their number and wait in line with the other people who may be out to get them."

Given the public frustration with the rate of gun violence, Nolan said it is not surprising that Menino would find any proposed remedy appealing.

"I understand that politically the mayor has to put out the perception that he's taking the issue seriously, and I have no doubt that he is," Nolan said. "This is something that is palatable to the general public. When people read about this, they say, 'Wow, that'll work,' and ignore the reality of how these kids live their lives. Cars aren't part of it."

This article by Naughton and Heins was reported and written for a seminar in investigative reporting at Northeastern University. The work was overseen and edited by Northeastern journalism professor Walter V. Robinson, a former editor of the Globe Spotlight Team. Robinson's e-mail is wrobinson@globe.com.



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